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SUMMARY

Evidence of the momentum towards the achievement of the goals of the World Summit for Children is increasing. Many developing countries are making major commitments and achieving substantial results, but donor countries, with some notable exceptions, need to do more to demonstrate the collective resolve to provide the modest level of resources required to sustain their part of the effort. While donor support for emergencies has increased, official development assistance as a whole is stagnating. Competition for available aid resources is growing, while the debt crisis in Africa still has not been resolved. The most promising avenue in the short run for assuring sufficient resource levels to sustain the momentum is through application of the "20/20" concept, through which 20 per cent of government expenditure and 20 per cent of development aid should be devoted to priority human concerns such as primary health care, family planning, nutrition, basic education and low-cost water supply and sanitation. The admonition to manage available resources more efficiently is being taken seriously by UNICEF and many developing countries. Meanwhile, continuing emergencies require a more fundamental review of the organization's structures and operations, and the future role of UNICEF in Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States is also a matter of concern. Executive Board restructuring provides an opportunity to reflect in greater depth on the contribution of UNICEF to the solution of the three main issues facing the world at the end of the twentieth century: poverty, population and environment.

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I. THE MOMENTUM FOR CHILDREN

1. In the developing world, it is now even clearer than it was a year ago that progress towards the achievement of the decade goals for children and development is gaining momentum. This momentum is both political and operational.

2. Deaths from measles have been brought down from more than 2.5 million per year in 1980 to just over 1 million a year today. Deaths from dehydration caused by diarrhoea have fallen from 4 million a year to less than 3 million. In 10 years, infant deaths from neonatal tetanus have been cut from more than 1 million a year to just over one half million. Polio is close to being eradicated in several regions of the developing world. From 5 million to 10 million cases of dracunculiasis (guinea worm disease) in the 1980s, prevalence dropped to an estimated one half million cases in 1992. As part of an effort to promote the great advantages of breast-feeding, 72 countries have acted to end the distribution of free and low-cost supplies of breast-milk substitutes to hospital and maternity facilities and another 53 continue their practice of prohibiting such distribution.

3. The movement towards ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child has maintained its dynamism, gaining momentum from the call of the World Conference on Human Rights for universal ratification by 1995. In 1993, the Executive Director informed the Executive Board that 130 countries had ratified the Convention; as of 1 January 1994 that number was 154. The Committee on the Rights of the Child has become fully operational; by the end of 1993, it had received 31 country reports and had reviewed 17 of them.

4. National programmes of action, completed by 91 countries and covering some 85 per cent of children in developing countries and 79 per cent of the entire world's child population, have become increasingly operational through extension to provincial and municipal levels. Every Indian state and every Chinese province is now preparing its own programme of action for children. In Latin America and the Caribbean, 16 out of 23 countries surveyed are carrying out programmes of action at subnational levels.

5. That there is real momentum on the education front became evident when heads of State and other high-level representatives of the nine most populous countries met in New Delhi, India, in December 1993. China, Mexico and Indonesia appear clearly to be on track towards the goal of achieving primary education for at least 80 per cent of primary-school-age children. Brazil, Egypt and India are making rapid progress and could achieve the goal as well, with some extra impetus of the kind displayed by the Prime Ministers of both India and Pakistan when they pledged to review progress on this and other goals every three months. Bangladesh, Nigeria and Pakistan have much farther to go than the other six countries, but solid progress should be expected from at least two of them. Workable, proven strategies were already in place for global achievement of the health, nutrition and water supply and sanitation goals, and with this conference, the corner has been turned on education as well.

6. Children continue to have an increasingly prominent place at the top of the agenda of world leaders. On the occasion of their receiving the Nobel Prize for Peace, President De Klerk of South Africa dedicated his address to the children of the world and to all those who are working to alleviate their plight, while Mr. Nelson Mandela committed the new South Africa "to the relentless pursuit of the purposes defined in the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children". At the Eighth International Vatican Conference on Children and the Future, probably the largest international conference ever held on the subject of children, Pope John Paul II pledged to involve the institutions of the Roman Catholic Church in achieving the goals of the World Summit for Children and expressed the hope that the Convention on the Rights of the Child may soon become the first universal treaty on children's rights. The President of the United States, at the launching of the 1994 State of the World's Children report, said, "there have been times when the fight for the world's children seemed to be a losing one. But the children's Summit and related events have transformed that frustration into hope ... Working with UNICEF and other governmental and non-governmental organizations [(NGOs)], we want to make those goals of the children's Summit come true".

7. Consensus has solidified around a set of targets for the end of 1995 that will demonstrate the seriousness of the world's commitment to the decade goals. This consensus, derived from regional assemblies such as the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation summits and the Asia and Pacific Ministerial Consultation on Goals for Children in the 1990s, was given visible manifestation on 30 September 1993, the third anniversary of the World Summit for Children, at the Roundtable on Keeping the Promise to Children convened by the Secretary-General and held at United Nations Headquarters. Seven heads of State or Government, along with special envoys and ministers from another 17 countries, participated. The co-chairs of that Roundtable, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia of Bangladesh and President Violeta Barrios de Chamorro of Nicaragua, said in their summation of the day's events, "it is our collective opinion that these mid-decade goals ... can be achieved in most countries with national will and a modicum of international support".

8. This momentum, as may be expected, is stronger in some countries and programme areas than in others. Despite the proven merits of oral rehydration therapy (ORT), over $1 billion is still being spent on anti-diarrhoeal remedies, most of which are useless or harmful; and there are still some 3 million child deaths from diarrhoea each year, most of which could be prevented by ORT. Progress towards the goal of eliminating neonatal tetanus by 1995 needs to be greatly accelerated. We still have to see significant change in the current situation as regards maternal mortality. Progress against pneumonia, now the leading killer of children, is still too slow. In 1994, the Executive Board may wish to consider these and other areas that need further stimulus and how this stimulus can best be given. The most critical missing element in this world-wide movement for children, however, is none of the above.

II. THE CRITICAL MISSING ELEMENT

9. The most critical element needed to sustain the global momentum for children is for the industrialized countries to show the collective resolve to provide the modest level of resources required to sustain their part of the effort. Most developing countries have demonstrated their commitment to this enterprise. They have not sat back waiting for donors to put up more money. They have proceeded with the resources at hand, and many have shown extraordinary political will to improve the lot of their children. The industrialized countries, which also pledged at the World Summit for Children to re-examine their development assistance budgets "to ensure that programmes aimed at the achievement of goals for the survival, development and protection of children when resources are allocated", have not - with one or possibly two exceptions - yet shown the same degree of political will.

10. This problem has several facets to it. One is that official development assistance (ODA) in general has ceased to grow, and for Africa, which depends on ODA for one half of the resource flows needed to achieve its goals for children, it is falling. It is true that the World Bank and some regional development banks are devoting much more of their resources to the social sectors. Since the early 1980s, lending by the World Bank for education has increased more than threefold, and twentyfold for population, health and nutrition. Nevertheless, these are loans, and a considerable proportion of them were made at non-concessional rates. Developing countries, especially the least developed among them, still require concessional aid to reach their national programme of action objectives.

11. One must hope that this levelling-off of ODA is a function of the recession that hit the industrialized countries in the early 1990s. If so, the recession is only temporary, and recent signs of recovery in 1994 should point to a resumption of ODA committed to human development. But there are also ominous signs of a growing inwardness in many developed societies that bode ill for prospects for increased ODA. Meanwhile, donor response to emergencies, though insufficient to meet all the needs created by the many contemporary crises, has grown considerably and this must be acknowledged.

12. A second aspect of the problem is the growing number of claimants to a share of the limited budgets that donor countries are able to approve for international concerns. Transitional aid to Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) competes, in many instances, with support for developing countries. In some cases, contributions to peace-keeping also compete, indirectly at least, with both humanitarian and development assistance.

13. Thirdly, the continuing debt crisis in most of the least developed countries, and especially in Africa, is a serious threat to the achievement of the goals for children. In many of the higher-income developing countries, particularly in Latin America, commercial banks have written off or renegotiated much of their debt and are now investing again. Official creditors, however, have not been as responsive. While some bilateral creditors have provided debt relief, sub-Saharan Africa's total indebtedness, 85 per cent of which is official, continues at unacceptable levels, projected to be 237 per cent of

exports in 1993, with debt servicing consuming over 30 per cent of all of Africa's foreign exchange earnings. Many of the poorest countries continue to languish in the debt trap, making it virtually impossible to do more for children even where the political will to do so is strong.

14. Many Executive Board members may feel that they have little if any leverage over those constraints. One area, however, over which they can exercise influence is the allocation of those resources which do exist. Perhaps the most promising avenue in the short run is through adopting the concept of "20/20". This UNICEF initiative, building on ideas first presented in the United Nations Development Programme's 1991 and 1992 Human Development Reports, is aimed at assuring that developing countries devote at least 20 per cent of government expenditure to human priority concerns (primary health care, family planning, nutrition, basic education, low-cost water supply and sanitation), supported by a level of ODA commensurate with these same priority areas. Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland of Norway, in her Rafael M. Salas Lecture at the United Nations on 28 September 1993, called the allocation of 20 per cent of government expenditure and 20 per cent of development aid to priority human concerns "a minimum requirement". This concept of "20/20" was formally endorsed in 1992 by the OAU International Conference on Assistance to African Children, by the Executive Board in 1993 and by the 1993 Asia and Pacific Ministerial Consultation on Goals for Children in the 1990s. This concept now needs to become far more widely accepted and applied. Under the new arrangements for its programme of work, the Executive Board may wish to consider devoting all or a portion of one session in 1994 to implementation of "20/20". Members from both developing and industrialized countries can do much to influence this process within their own Governments. Many also have influence on executive bodies of international financial institutions such as the World Bank and the regional development banks. Also, as members of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, a number of delegations can exercise leverage, not only in favour of the application of the "20/20" concept, but also to promote more transparent and standardized reporting on how development assistance is allocated.

15. Just as the political will to achieve the goals for children has not been uniform in all developing countries, neither is the lack of response uniform among donors. Some devote as much as 1 per cent of their national resources to ODA. Some already allocate close to 20 per cent of ODA to human priority concerns. Some have cancelled the debt of developing countries for humanitarian reasons. A few donors shoulder the larger share of the budgets of organizations such as UNICEF. Nevertheless, taken as a whole, the donor response leaves considerable room for improvement.

III. COST-EFFECTIVENESS

16. When asked to provide more resources for development, donors are responding more and more frequently with requests that Governments and aid agencies manage more carefully the resources they already have. Such requests are, of course, legitimate. But a large number of developing countries have carried out massive reforms of public sector finances and management over the past 10 years. In

many cases, they have improved their ability to begin borrowing again, but not, by and large, their access to concessional assistance.

17. Those national programmes of action which include a review of national financing for social programmes and an analysis of costs for achieving their goals provide an ideal framework for donors to enter into a compact with recipient Governments on cost-effective programmes for children. So far, there have been expressions of interest in the idea of such compacts, but very little concrete action.

18. UNICEF too has taken seriously the admonitions from donors to manage its resources more carefully. The ratio of administrative and programme support budget expenditure to total net expenditure has declined from 23 per cent in 1986 to 18.8 per cent in 1993. The proportion of headquarters staff to all staff in UNICEF has been lowered from 16 per cent in 1986 to 15 per cent this year. Supply Division has increased its item requisition volume by 14 per cent and its throughput of purchase orders by 31 per cent per staff member since 1989, while Accounts Section has increased the number of transactions per staff member by 60 per cent since 1987. As a consequence of computerization, there has been a nearly 10 per cent reduction in the ratio of secretaries to professional staff at headquarters between 1992 and 1994. Travel budgets of International Professional staff have been cut by 5 per cent for the 1994-1995 biennium. Staff around the world are being trained in cost analysis, and UNICEF has embarked on the management study mandated by the Executive Board with an eye towards streamlining the organization even further.

19. The strategies that UNICEF and its partners are supporting in developing countries are extremely cost-effective. According to the World Bank's 1993 World Development Report on health, an expanded programme on immunization ("EPI Plus") strategy of the kind that UNICEF supports in many parts of the world would have the highest cost-effectiveness of any health measure available in the world today. The virtual elimination of iodine and vitamin A deficiency diseases, while far from inexpensive on a national or global scale, would have most favourable cost-benefit ratios when compared with the cost burden that those diseases and disorders place on society. And what could be more sustainable than the total eradication of a disease such as polio or dracunculiasis?

20. If the international community cannot achieve even the very low cost targets of immunization levels of 80 per cent or better, virtual elimination of neonatal tetanus, a drastic reduction in measles deaths, polio eradication in selected regions, 80 per cent use of ORT, universal salt iodization, virtual elimination of vitamin A deficiencies, elimination of dracunculiasis in endemic areas, implementation of the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative and universal ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, then its commitment to achieving the full package of goals endorsed by the World Summit for Children would indeed be a matter for serious doubt.

21. The donors' emphasis on better resource management and accountability over the past few years has been timely and is bearing fruit. Nevertheless, industrialized countries now need to find new ways to respond with both the moral and the financial support that the developing countries need, especially

for crucial foreign exchange items such as vaccines, textbooks, and essential supplies for water supply and sanitation programmes, if the extraordinary momentum for children is not to falter.

IV. EMERGENCIES

22. The one broad area in which donor response has continued to increase is that of emergency operations. Emergency programmes in 1993 accounted for over one fourth of all UNICEF programme expenditure. In 1991 and 1992, when emergencies accounted for 19 and 22 per cent of expenditure, respectively, the tendency was to consider such a proportion as a temporary phenomenon. The 1992-1995 medium-term plan projected that the proportion of expenditure devoted to emergencies would decrease to the levels of the period 1988-1990, when it was less than 10 per cent. Clearly, given the realities of the post-cold-war era, we can no longer continue hoping that such decreases will take place any time soon.

23. The secretariat does not view emergency responses as a deviation from the pursuit of the organization's overall goals and objectives. UNICEF responds to disasters within its mandate for children and in close collaboration with other United Nations agencies and bilateral and NGO groups. As quickly as possible, UNICEF assistance moves from disaster relief to rehabilitation and development. Many emergency measures such as immunization and ORT are at the forefront of UNICEF programmes in non-emergency situations. Emergencies often provide opportunities for empowering families with new knowledge and skills that are necessary for child survival and development under more normal conditions as well.

24. What the growing demand for emergency responses does mean, however, is that the organization has had to review its structures and its operations in order to respond better to emergency situations. In both 1992 and 1993, four staff members lost their lives in the service of children in emergency situations. Staff security is a growing concern. Several measures are being taken to deal with this and generally to improve response capacity, as set forth in document E/ICEF/1994/11. The forthcoming management study of UNICEF will no doubt make useful recommendations in this regard as well. The 1994 Executive Board may wish to pay special attention to this situation and provide further guidance in this crucial area.

25. Two other important issues on which the Board may wish to advise the secretariat are, first, the protection of the humanitarian mandates, and second, the issue of populations displaced within the borders of their own countries. Agencies such as UNICEF, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the World Food Programme sometimes find their missions compromised by the political and military role of the United Nations in conflict situations. Upholding the humanitarian principles of neutrality, impartiality and humanity has become much more difficult where the United Nations is also involved politically and militarily, and especially where sanctions mandated by the United Nations are in force. As for the internally displaced, the United Nations is facing a growing problem in this area and, while it has an institutionalized response to the problem of refugees, it needs to think about a

more coherent approach to much larger numbers of people dislocated by war and other disasters who never cross an international frontier.

V. CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE AND THE COMMONWEALTH OF INDEPENDENT STATES

26. Closely related to the issues surrounding emergency programmes are those associated with the new involvement of UNICEF in Central and Eastern Europe and CIS. Information obtained in the region during the last two years has shown sharp increases in poverty and seriously declining indicators of the health and welfare of children, and indeed almost all sectors of the population. In addition to emergency responses in several parts of this region, UNICEF programme support was extended in 1993 to seven additional countries. The limited resources actually available to UNICEF in this region, however, make it very difficult for the organization to devote the level of technical and managerial resources required to have a significant impact on the well-being of children. The secretariat is reviewing its operations and organizational structure in this part of the world, and on the basis of this review, a clear proposal will be presented to the Executive Board later in 1994.

VI. UNITED NATIONS REFORM AND EXECUTIVE BOARD RESTRUCTURING: AN OPPORTUNITY FOR REFLECTION

27. The past year has seen considerable progress on reform of the United Nations system. UNICEF is fully committed to implementation of General Assembly resolution 47/199 of 22 December 1992 and has played a crucial role in that process, applying its experience as chair during 1993 of the Joint Consultative Group on Policies (JCGP). There has been progress on the harmonization of programme cycles, the development of a common manual, resolving issues concerning the establishment of common premises, the development of system-wide training programmes, establishing criteria and methods of selecting resident coordinators and supporting the implementation of the country strategy note. Practical, country-level actions have been taken in many countries to make the guidelines and procedures developed within the JCGP framework a reality.

28. The year 1994 will mark a new era in the history of the Executive Board. Changes brought about by General Assembly resolution 48/162 of 20 December 1993 on the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields have resulted in a change in Board composition and the nature of its deliberations. Just what form these changes will take was not known at the time this report was prepared. The Executive Director would, however, suggest certain themes that the Board might wish to consider in greater depth than it has been able to in the past. One, as already mentioned, is for the Board to take a closer look at the concept of "20/20", to see how it can be applied by Board members from both developing and donor countries.

29. Above all, however, the Executive Director would urge Board members to take advantage of the opportunity provided by the new structure to focus on the full implications of the goals for children and development for the year 2000. This undertaking far transcends the well-being of children. Achieving the goal of

basic education for all is one of the most fundamental prerequisites for lowering birth rates, reducing poverty and slowing environmental degradation. Doing what now can be done to improve child health, reduce child deaths and provide basic education not only would be a significant advance in its own right, but also would contribute to the lowering of birth rates. The principal contribution of UNICEF to the implementation of Agenda 21 will be by attacking some of the main causes of environmental degradation: illiteracy and ignorance; malnutrition; poor sanitation; lack of access to clean water; the absence of family planning information and services; and the stress that all these conditions place on women. Taken together, the improvement of child survival, health, education and family planning services could have a decisive impact on the problems of poverty, population and environment what the 1994 State of the World's Children report calls the "PPE" (poverty, population, environment) problem in the years ahead.

30. On the eve of the International Conference on Population and Development, it is particularly important that UNICEF convey the message that reaching all of the decade goals for children could make the difference between a world population that stabilizes about a century from now at a level of approximately 10 billion people, and a world population that stabilizes one half a century later at a much larger total. UNICEF and the World Summit for Children have laid out a concrete programme for making this kind of difference. It will be a test of the seriousness of the international community at the Conference of whether or not it is willing to put its weight behind such a programme.

31. The achievement of basic health, education and nutrition goals will go a long way towards eliminating the worst manifestations of poverty by the year 2000. At the World Summit for Social Development in 1995, there will be many other ideas and proposals for the alleviation and elimination of poverty. The decade goals for children should be an important part of the wider consensus to emerge from that Summit. But if the human community cannot achieve even the minimum that these goals represent, the credibility of the Social Summit's wider agenda may be in question.

32. If the Executive Board were to find time to ponder and debate some of these wider issues during the additional time gained for governance by the new reforms, it would add a whole new dimension to its work and provide the secretariat with vital guidance for the critical years ahead.